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As a nation, we tend to focus primarily on the service members who willingly put themselves in harm's way to protect the freedoms that we cherish. However, we often forget that the families they leave behind sacrifice just as much as our heroes do. These families are affected in countless ways, and we have an obligation to do right by them.

The challenges that they face are not a mystery. If a spouse rotates to a different military installation, the entire family is uprooted and has to create a new support structure. Their kids have to start new schools. The families have to identify new caregivers for their children, a new specialist if they have a family member with special needs and sometimes a new house if they are not living on the base. If the spouse is not in the military, then they also have to find a new job — often with new state credentialing requirements. Given these tough economic times, it is not difficult to imagine just how great this burden is for the families of our troops.

At the start of the last Congress, we came together in a bipartisan way to found the Congressional Military Family Caucus because we felt it was important to educate our fellow Members of Congress, their staff and the nation about the sacrifices that our military families make to defend our country.

Last month, we kicked off the Congressional Military Family Caucus in the 112th Congress and heard from high-ranking officials at the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs about what they are doing to improve the resources available to our military families.

We are eager to work with these leading officials and the military families themselves to delve deeper into specific issues. There are programs that are working, and we must replicate them to extend their effects. We must also be willing to have frank discussions about programs that are not working, or identify needs where no coherent programs exist and then address those needs.

We must also be creative in adapting programs to meet the needs of our military families. That's why — to take one example — we recently introduced a bill with Reps. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) and Loretta Sanchez (D-Calif.) that would create flexible spending accounts for military families.

Right now, FSAs are available to civilian employees at the Defense Department, but not to uniformed service members and their families. That's wrong. There is no reason military personnel shouldn't have the same access to FSAs as their civilian counterparts. And that's why we're going to work together in a bipartisan way to advance this bill through Congress and have it signed into law.

At a time when we're borrowing \$5 billion every day on top of a \$14 trillion national debt, we must be willing to accept the fiscal constraints of our nation and understand that the federal government may not have all the solutions. That makes hunkering down and doing some real work on public-private partnerships, benchmark programs and gaps more important than ever.

Even so, after asking our active duty, National Guard and Reserve soldiers and families to fight two wars, often with multiple deployments, Congress and the American people must meet our commitment to our heroes and their families. That's the founding principle of the 79 Representatives who are proudly part of the Congressional Military Family Caucus.

As President Barack Obama said at a recent White House event, "While less than 1 percent of Americans may be fighting our wars, 100 percent of Americans should be supporting our troops and their families."

We wholeheartedly agree. And in the 112th Congress, we must continue to do everything we can to make sure our troops and veterans and their families have all the support that they need and deserve. As a grateful nation, we can do no less.

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R) represents Washington's 5th district, and Rep. Sanford Bishop (D) represents Georgia's 2nd district. They co-chair the Congressional Military Family Caucus.